

THAT YOU MAY
KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

“Assurance and
the Experience
of God’s Love”


1 John 4:15–21

REVIEW


“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

—1 John 5:13

- **1 John 1:1–4 – “Assurance and the Historicity of Christ”**

 *Do you believe that the biblical testimony about Jesus Christ is true?*

- **1 John 1:5–10 – “Assurance and the Confession of Sin”**

 *Are you deeply aware of your sin and do you acknowledge it to God?*

- **1 John 2:1–2 – “Assurance and the Sufficiency of Christ”**

 *Do you believe that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for your sin?*

- **1 John 2:3–6 – “Assurance and the Obedience of God’s Commands”**

 *Are you zealous to obey God’s revealed will for your life?*

- **1 John 2:7–11 – “Assurance and the Love of One’s Brother”**

 *Do you give yourself sacrificially for the benefit of other believers?*

- **1 John 2:12–17 – “Assurance and the Hatred of Evil”**

 *Do you loathe the things that are contrary to God and His ways?*


- **1 John 2:18–27 – “Assurance and the Persistence in Truth”**

 *Do you hunger for and persist in the truth of God’s Word?*


- **1 John 2:28–3:3 – “Assurance and the Anticipation of Glory”**

 *Does your longing for Christ’s return influence your life today?*


- **1 John 3:4–10 – “Assurance and the Practice of Righteousness”**

 *Are you convinced that sin is utterly inconsistent with your new life?*

- **1 John 3:11–24 – “Assurance and the Lifestyle of Love”**

 *Are you convinced that love is absolutely essential to your new life?*


- **1 John 4:1–6 – “Assurance and the Discernment of Error”**

 *Do you care about the truth and are you growing in discernment?*

- **1 John 4:7–10 – “Assurance and the Primacy of God’s Love”**

 *Does your love for others flow from an awe over God’s love for you?*

- **1 John 4:11–14 – “Assurance and the Reflection of God’s Love”**

 *Do you feel compelled to love others because of God’s love for you?*

“Assurance and the Experience of God’s Love” – 1 John 4:15–21

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”

G O D
IS
L O V E

I. The Vertical Impact

1 John 4:15–16a

*“We have come to know
and have believed the love
which God has for us.”*

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us” (4:15–16a).

- **“Whoever confesses”** – a basic, universal truth; “to confess” = “to say the same thing,” “to be of one mind”; not mere assent but conviction.
 - “Confession is not *claiming* something to be true but *admitting* it is true” (Derickson, *1, 2, 3 John*, 454–55).
 - The confession in view here is seen as *fundamental* and *complete*.
- **“That Jesus is the Son of God”** – the substance of the confession; it is one that relates specifically to the *identity* of the historical person of *Jesus*, namely, that He is also *divine*.

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him.”

—1 John 5:1

“These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

—John 20:31

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

—Romans 10:9

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us” (4:15–16a).

- **“God abides in him”** – the essence of salvation; invincible life imparted directly by the ultimate Source of all life who now indwells him; see also 1 John 4:4.
- **“And he in God”** – a mutual abiding; direct dependency upon and identification/fellowship with Almighty God.
- The definitive act of *confession* at conversion brings about a new, continuous state of reality—one of *union* and *indwelling*; this is the ultimate blessing of the Christian life!

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. **We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us” (4:15–16a).**

- After summarizing conversion/confession and the new life that follows, John adds a statement relating to *assurance*.
- **“We”**– emphatic (“*we ourselves*”); it includes the apostle John and all others who “confess” this truth about Jesus Christ.
- **“Have come to know and have believed”** – describes the knowledge and trust that were expressed at a moment in time (conversion) that bring on-going results (see John 6:69).

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed **the love which God has for us” (4:15–16a).**

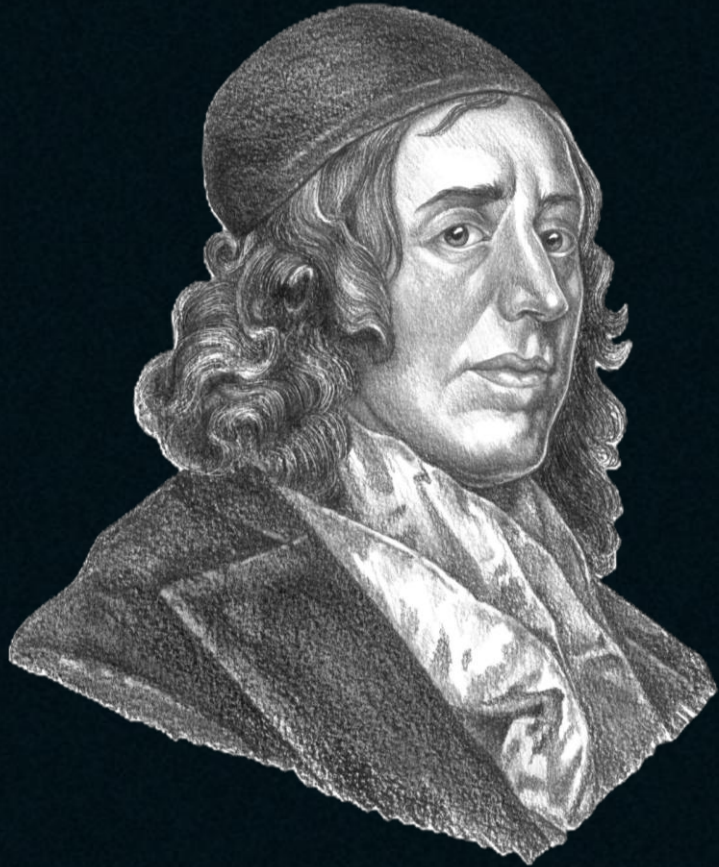
- **“The love which God has”** – the content of what has come to be known and believed: *God’s love*.
 - The *historical expression* of this love was described in 4:9–10.
 - Here, the verb tense **“has”** speaks of the *present-moment* expression; God *continues* to love those for whom He sent Christ as the propitiation for sin.
- **“For us”** – *literally*, “in us” —describes the highly personal nature of God’s expression of love for His children.



“There is such love and such grace in the heart of God [that] if you understood the length and breadth and height and depth of it, you would never be discouraged.”

—Jonathan Edwards

Men of the Word



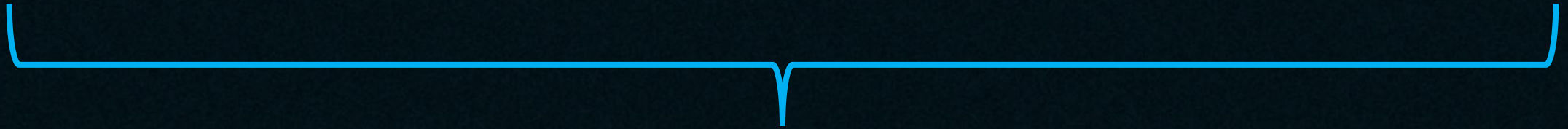
“The love of the Father is the only
rest of the soul.”

—John Owen

CONFESSIOIN (v. 15a)



LIFE WITH GOD (v. 15b)



ASSURANCE (v. 16a)

G O D
IS
L O V E


II. The Internal Impact

1 John 4:16b–18

*“There is no fear in love;
but perfect love
casts out fear.”*

“God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (4:16b).

- **“God is love”** – John makes this assertion a second time (the first was in 4:8); it is the only NT declaration of God’s character that is repeated; it is not an exhaustive description, but it is an absolutely true one.
 - *Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758):* “The very nature of God is love. If it should be enquired what God is, it might be answered that he is an infinite and incomprehensible fountain of love.”
- **“The one who abides in love abides in God”** – the same connection as in 1:5–7; spiritual union and fellowship with God inevitably lead to the reflection of God’s moral character; to abide in love = to love one another.



“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world” (4:17).

- **“By this”** – refers to the truth just stated in v. 16b; it introduces a logical conclusion to the reality of the *mutual abiding* experienced by believers.
- **“Love is perfected with us”** – love has *achieved its goal* in the lives of believers as they abide in love as God intends (as they *love one another*).
 - Love was never meant to remain “in word only” or in abstract thought but has been “poured out within our hearts” (Rom 5:5) by God to be exercised toward others in the church through tangible acts.

“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world” (4:17).

- **“So that”** – expresses a result of the experience of God’s love in the believer’s life.
- **“We may have confidence”** – the apostle includes himself (“we”) and describes an achievable reality (“may have”); “confidence” = “boldness in speech”; the term is used of *confident prayer* in 3:21 and in 5:14, and of *confidence at Jesus’ appearance* in 2:28.
- **“In the day of judgment”** – not a reference to the Great White Throne Judgment (see Matthew 25:31–46; Revelation 20:11–15) but to the Judgment Seat of Christ (reserved for believers at Jesus’ 2nd coming).

“... each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. . . .”

—1 Corinthians 3:12–15

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

—2 Corinthians 5:10

“in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day”

—2 Timothy 4:8

“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so also are we in this world**” (4:17).

- “**Because**” – introduces the reason why believers can already have confidence about their appearance at this future judgment.
- “**As He is**” – a reference to Jesus Christ, the One before whom believers will appear (see 2:28); He is *in fellowship/union* with God the Father.
- “**So also are we in this world**” – even though not yet perfected in this life (see 3:2–3), we are nonetheless in *fellowship/union* with God—at peace with Him because of Christ’s propitiation (see 4:10).

It Is Well With My Soul

1. When peace like a riv - er at - tend - eth my way, When sor - rows like
2. My sin— Oh, the bliss of this glo - ri - ous tho't— My sin, not in
(faster) 3. And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled

sea - bil - lows roll; What ev - er my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
part but the whole, Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more;
back as a scroll, The trump shall re - sound and the Lord shall de - scend,
(cues: vs. 3 only)

Chorus
"It is well, it is well with my soul." It is well
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is well
"E - ven so" it is well with my soul.

with my soul, with my soul, It is well, it is well with my soul.

“And Lord haste the day
when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll.
The trump shall resound
and the Lord shall descend.
Even so, it is well, with my soul!”

—Stanza 3, “It Is Well with My Soul”

“There is no **fear** in **love**; but **perfect love** casts out **fear**, because **fear** involves punishment, and the one who **fears** is not **perfected in love**”
(4:18).

- “**Fear**” – mentioned four times in v. 18; not “reverence” (“the *fear* of the Lord”; 2 Corinthians 5:11) but “dread”—specifically, the kind of dread expressed by those who believe they will be punished for their crimes.
- “**Love**” – mentioned three times in v. 18; the antithesis of fear; it has nothing in common with this kind of fear; it cannot co-exist with it.
- “**Perfect love**” – not love devoid of imperfection, but love that is *achieving God’s purpose for it* in the life of the believer; it has been “poured out within our hearts” (Romans 5:5) and is being exercised in practice toward others.



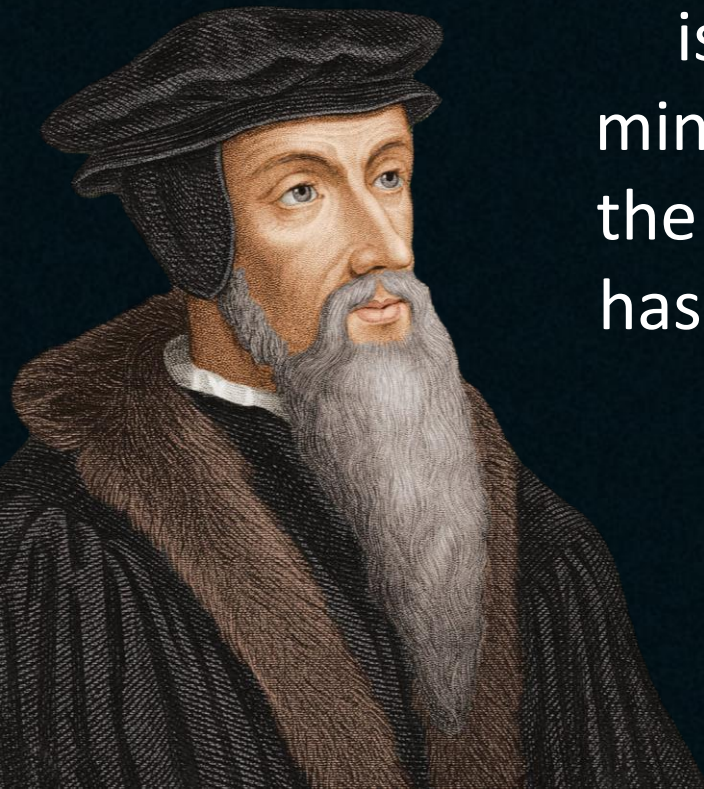
God intends that the believer's growing experience of love, primarily of *God's love for Him* but also *his love for others*, will expel any remaining fears of punishment and instill a strong sense of assurance.

Men of the Word

“The sum of it is that there is nothing worse than being worried by continual disquiet, and we arrive at a calm rest outside fear by being aware of God’s love toward us. . . . But it may be asked, When does perfect love cast out fear? For we are endued with only a taste of the divine love for us, and therefore can never be wholly freed from fear. I reply . . . fear is not cast out in such a way that it does not assault our minds, but it is so cast out that it does not disturb or hamper the peace we obtain by faith. . . . When anyone fears (that is, has a disturbed mind) it is the fault of unbelief. For when the love of God is properly known, it calms the mind.”

—John Calvin

Men of the Word



GOD
IS
LOVE

III. The Horizontal Impact

1 John 4:19–21

“We love, because He first loved us.”

A. The Motivation for Loving Others

“We love, **because He first loved us**” (4:19).

- Paul begins with the logic of *cause* and *effect*; God’s love for us is always the cause, while our love for others is always the effect.
- “**Because He first loved us**” – “He” is emphatic (“because He *Himself* first loved us”).
- **1 John 4:10** – “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”
- Right motivation is essential to the Christian life—and to the doctrine of assurance.

B. The Obligation for Loving Others

“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (4:20).

- **“If someone says”** – the summary of a false claim being made by the secessionists (see also 2:9–11; 3:11–24); John denounces it as *a lie*.
- **“Whom he has seen . . . whom he has not seen”** – an argument from the lesser to the greater.
- John Stott: “It is obviously easier to love and serve a visible man than an invisible God, and if we fail in the easier task, it is absurd to claim success in the harder” (*Epistles of John*, 171).

C. The Sanction for Loving Others

“And **this commandment** we have **from Him**,
that **the one who loves God** **should love his brother also**” (4:21).

- **“This commandment”** – not a mere suggestion or wish, but an authoritative mandate; it is identified in the second half of the sentence.
- **“From Him”** – from Jesus Christ (see John 13:34; 15:12, 17).
- **“The one who loves God”** – the one who has come to know, believe, and experience God’s love.
- **“Should love his brother also”** – the secessionists rejected this correlation; but this is divine logic; the experience of love brings obligations.

“The Spirit of the True Saints Is a Spirit of Divine Love” – Jonathan Edwards

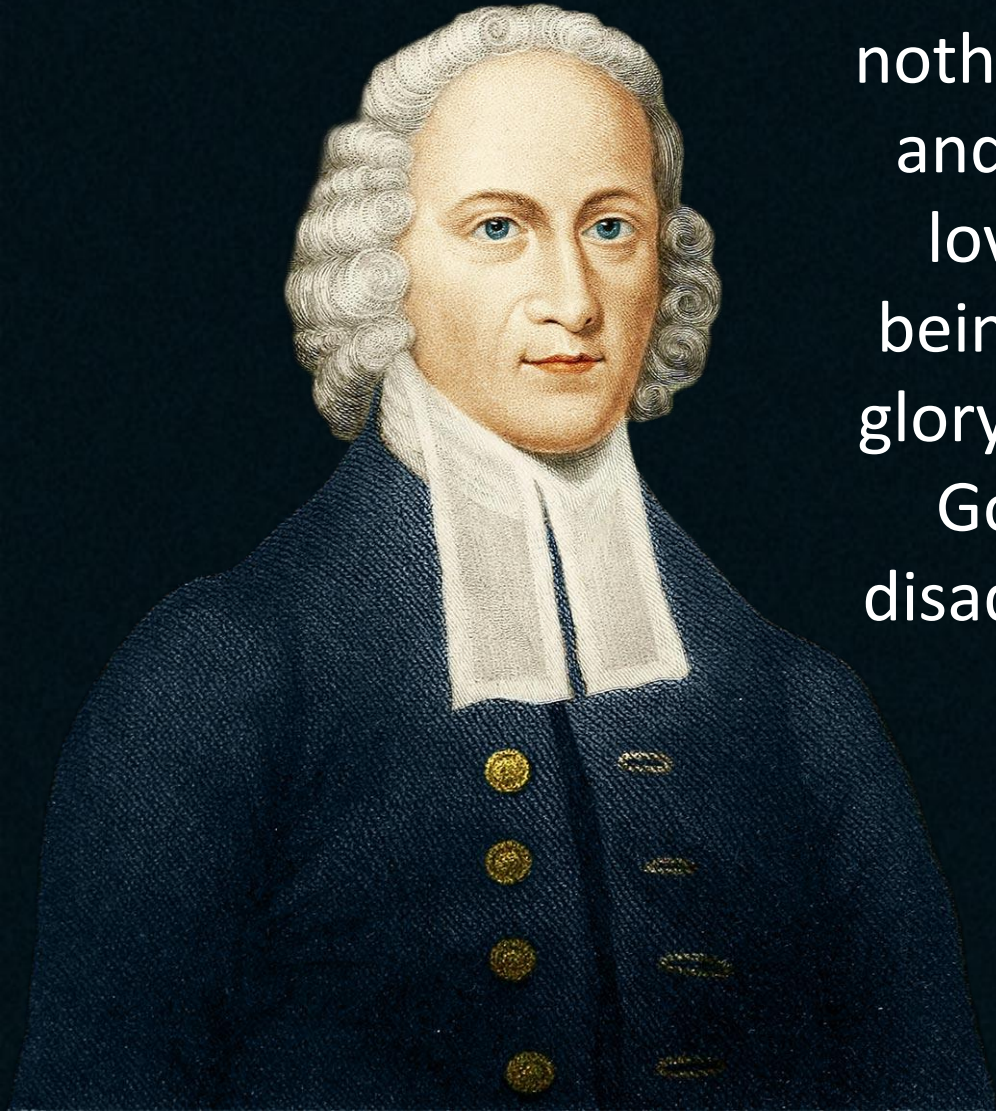
“Consider what Christ has done for you. He died for you. O what did he bear for you. If you knew the pains, the distress, and the agonies the glorious Son of God underwent for you, how would the thoughts of his kindness and love to you overcome you. . . .

“God in Christ allows such little, poor creatures as you are to come to him, to love communion with him, and to maintain a communication of love with him. You may go to God and tell him how you love him and open your heart and he will accept of it. You may be familiar in your expressions of your love to Christ, as little or unworthy as you are, for he is near to you. He is come down from heaven and has taken upon him the human nature on purpose, that he might be near to you and might be, as it were, your companion. . . .

You may place yourself in his divine embraces. . . .



“Therefore, don’t let your unworthiness discourage you. Let it heighten your surprise and cause you to express your love in the most humble manner possible. But let it not keep you at a distance or change the expressions of your love. You may want humility in your love, but you never can be guilty of any excess in the joys of divine love. . . .



“Let these considerations influence you to the love of God and Jesus Christ, to love them with a superlative love and love nothing contrary to them, and love nothing above them, and love nothing equal to them, and love nothing along with them with any parallel love. And express your love by doing for them by being willing all your days to labor and suffer for the glory of God. Can you think of living so as to dishonor God and to be a stumbling block to others and a disadvantage to religion without the utmost dread of it and being sick at the thought of it?”

—Jonathan Edwards, “The Spirit of the True Saints Is a Spirit of Divine Love”

Men of the Word

2025-2026

THAT YOU MAY
KNOW

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN